

Tunku remembered fondly by bodyguard

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Tunku Abdul Rahman will always remain in the memories of his personal staff. The first prime minister earned a place forever in their hearts with his kindness, love and passion for life, write MELISSA DARLYNE CHOW and S. ARULLDAS

OWEN Chung, 73, remembers Tunku Abdul Rahman as a man of many admirable traits.

The first prime minister was honest, wise, fair and blessed with a sense of humour that could disarm even the most hostile person. He also had a sixth-sense for danger.

The Tunku's one-time bodyguard and later aide-de-camp said "Bapa Malaysia" was also a person of simple tastes who did not envy the rich or chase after the good things in life.

He said the Tunku insisted that his children never get special treatment as they were told to depend on their own efforts to improve themselves.

"He always stressed that his children had to be treated like everyone else. He did not like his children asking for favours or being treated differently."

The Tunku was also very helpful to those around him, especially his personal staff.

Owen worked for free as Tunku's aide-de-camp after

retirement as "he was like a father to me".

"I worked for him out of the willingness of my heart, and did not take any salary as my son covered my expenses."

The Tunku was very fair to all, irrespective of race. He said the Tunku wanted the Chinese to play an active role in politics and offered the community the post of chief minister in Penang and Malacca.

"Luckily, the four prime ministers after him followed in his footsteps and retained the policy," added Owen, who worked for the Tunku for 18 years until his death in 1990.

Owen still remembers the Tunku's wisdom in matters big and small. There was the time in 1989 when the Tunku organised a *doa selamat* after Owen returned from heart surgery in Singapore.

"During the dinner, he told me that God had helped me survive the operation so that I

could fully pay my penance. If you pay your penance, you go in peace. If not, you have to suffer until you fully pay your penance."

On the Tunku's sense of humour, he said it was legendary with the leader cracking jokes when one least expected it.

He remembers accompanying the Tunku to a round of golf one day where many greeted the bodyguard but remained quietly respectful around the former.

"The Tunku later called me and asked: 'How come everybody knows you and nobody knows me?'"

Owen later found out why everyone had greeted him: it was one of the rare occasions when he had worn his police uniform and this had caught their eye.

On the Tunku's sixth-sense, he remembers two occasions when it came to the fore.

The first occasion was when they were on a boat not too far

off the coast.

"Suddenly, we realised that the boat was leaking badly and water was rushing in.

"The Tunku said we should turn left and head further out into the open sea while the rest of us wanted to head to shore.

"We listened to the Tunku and soon hit a sandbar where we waited for the arrival of marine police. If we had gone the other way, we may not have made it to shore."

The second incident saw the Tunku insisting on walking down the stairs after his afternoon nap despite always using a specially designed lift.

"We later carried him on a chair down the stairs. As we were about to leave later for the supermarket, we heard a loud crashing inside the house. The lift had crashed."

Suffice to say Owen has always lived by the Tunku's rules: Never take advantage of people, be humble, be honest.